1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

[132] The rainfall ranges from twenty-two to twenty-seven inches, in normal years, and is heavier as one moves from north to south. The important point that must be kept sight of is the fact that ninety percent of the rain falls in June, July, August, and September, while the months from October through June are almost totally dry. Indeed even within the four-month rainy season, about eighteen inches of the annual rainfall comes during July and August, so that in exceptionally dry years, June and September can easily turn out to be rainless months.

The various seasons are tied closely to the basic facts of rainfall and latitude. As the rain begins in June the dry sandy soil suddenly comes to life with large stretches of new grass and new leaves on the died-up thorn bushes. From atop one of the Bornu ridges, or from the roof of a house, the entire landscape, as far as the eye can see, starts to change color from yellow-brown to a soft green. The weather cools delightfully, the rains become more frequent, and the short daily storms freshen the air. The people call this period "the rain," and consider it by far the most pleasant time of the year, even though there is extra work for everybody because this is the planting and hoeing season, and there is as well the extra unpleasantness of increased numbers and endless varieties of insects that thrive at this time. After the rains in the months of October and November, and often into mid-December the proximity to the equator produces a short, hot season with clear, still days. In a sense this is autumn. The green of summer fades and the bushland changes to light browns, yellows and grays, except for the ripening millet in the fields, and the evergreen Nim tree. Towards the end of this season the weather cools, and a daily wind from the north to northeast blows in from the Sahara. This is the famous Harmattan that even coats shoreward sides of ships with red dust 100 miles off the coast of West Africa. It starts up about eight o'clock in the morning, to wane by about four in the afternoon, making for relatively cool, still mornings and evenings, with rather harsh, sandy winds, for most of the day, so that one wants to cover face and eyes when riding on horseback, especially into the wind. The people have a special word for this time of year which translates as "winter" but which also means "harvest," since the main crops—millet, guinea corn, and ground-nuts—are harvested towards the end of autumn and beginning of winter. By the end of February or beginning of March the coolness of winter has gone. The Harmattan wind still blows but it gets hotter every day and the nights, although windless and a trifle cooler than the days, begin to approach the daytime temperature. Indeed it is not uncommon for the temperature to remain about 100° F for several weeks on end, so that when a break finally comes, ninety degrees seems like an exuberantly pleasant relief. This is the hot season, called "the heat" locally, and considered by all to be the most unpleasant time of year, which gives even greater sweetness to the cooling rains when they finally arrive in June.

There are, then, in all, four seasons: the rains from June to September; a short, hot season in October and November; a cooler, windy winter from December to February; and a sharply hot dry period from March to June. Another way of looking at the seasons, also used by the people, and one which will be utilized to some extent in this book, is to simply speak of a dry season, from September to June, and a wet season from mid-June to mid-September. Obviously the contrast between the various seasons of the dry months is not nearly so great as between the rainy months and the rest of the year.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

Clothing, like food, is in the hands of the household head although, and as in the case of food, he is always pressured to obtain and distribute more than he can afford. At harvest time, or major religious ceremonies during the year, and at celebrations of *rites de passage* by household members, new clothing is in order and is expected by everyone. Clients and subordinates in nearby households expect gifts of clothing as well. Wealthy men may find it necessary to purchase several hundred men's robes a year just to satisfy their many dependents; on the other hand, a normal peasant householder can usually get by annually with under a half a dozen for male household members including himself and a similar number of women's robes for his wives.

Household heads must also organize and pay for repairs to compound walls and sleeping huts, fuel and equipment for cooking fires, and kerosene for the lamps. They must supply as well the ladies of the household with money for their fortnightly hair styling, perfumes, pomade for rubbing on their skin, and kola nuts. When someone is sick, they must consult the religious practitioner and the native doctor who diagnose the case, start the necessary prayers, and sell charms to effect a cure. Besides all this they must enter into community life, go to the weddings, naming ceremonies of friends, and have these friends come to their own ceremonies. Each time they attend affairs they and their household members must give gifts to those responsible for the ceremony. The more a man gives and the more often he goes to such ceremonies, the more successful and wealthy and contact-laden he is reputed to be. Most people are prudent and do not go beyond their means. Indeed the Kanuri term for "spendthrift" translates literally as "one who goes to many ceremonies."

Consumption at the household level is organized by the household head and carried out under his guidance and control. He is constantly purchasing more so he can distribute it more generously to more people; yet for the ordinary household the bulk of the expenditure, roughly sixty percent of the household's earning power, is for food, and the next largest item is clothing, at about fifteen percent. This leaves approximately twenty-five percent of the household earning capacity to take care of everything in cash and kind beyond the simple necessities of food and clothing.[2]

Households as Producers

Kanuri production is tied traditionally to two interrelated factors in the physical and social environment of Bornu. These are, first, the geographical and ecological characteristics of the area, and secondly, the way in which agricultural and nonagricultural pursuits complement one another in the economy. The Bornu area has a short rainy season from June to September and crop production is carried out during these months. Planting begins about the time of the first rains, and the first hoeing takes place shortly afterward. The second hoeing is carried on from the beginning of October to the end of November. Each hoeing requires between two to three weeks' work and harvesting may take as long as a month to a month and a half. Between these periods, beyond occasional scrutiny to see that straying

[2] These data and much of the other material for this chapter were obtained (a) from detailed budget studies in a small sample of twenty-two rural households, and (b) from a less detailed survey of seventy-five rural households in three villages in the Magumeri area.

137 courses are marked increasingly by dum palm trees (Cucifera Thebaica), and this heightens the impression that the border of the great Sahara desert lies not far away.

133 Because of the flatness of the land, rain water does not drain readily into streams and rivers. Low areas become marshes, roads become quagmires, and towns are completely cut off. The Yobe, a slow, meandering river, flows throughout the year though it may dwindle to a width of twenty-five feet in the dry season. At some time in July its flood reaches Geidam and it then swells to a width of half a mile.

3. Rainfall and Temperature.

132 The agricultural productivity of the region is determined completely by the amount of rainfall. The rainy season begins in early May and lasts until October. Sporadic rains mark its beginning. During its height it may rain every other day, usually at evening time for half an hour to an hour.. The storm clouds can be seen gathering in the east in the late afternoon. A strong warning wind precedes the rain, which descends in sheets. At times during the rainy season, from a slight rise of ground, one can see several distinct storms on the horizon, the distant columns of mist falling from their individual clouds. During this time of the year the temperature is moderate and pleasant.

The rains steadily decrease in frequency and come to a halt in October. A brief hot season follows, lasting until December when the cold sets in. For several months the temperature drops

132 nightly, often approaching freezing. This is also the time of the harmattan, a strong wind bearing down from the desert, carrying with it silt and fine white sand. The sand stings the face and chaps the lips. It penetrates all cracks and openings, covering everything with fine powder. The mornings are cold but the noon sun is always strong and brilliant.

This period is followed by the long hot season. For months the temperature ranges between ninety and one hundred degrees F., often soaring to one hundred and ten degrees. Clouds never appear and the glaring sun is reflected and intensified by the shimmering sand. Beneath the unrelenting sun the countryside withers and turns brown.

B. History

195 [101] The name 'Bornu' refers to the ancient empire of Bornu which existed here for more than a thousand years. The Kanuri people, builders of the empire of Bornu, moved into the plain of Bornu from the still more arid reaches north and east of Lake Chad. According to the historical sources, the Sefawa, a part of the Zaghawa tribe, allied themselves with the Teda in the neighborhood of Kawar at about 850 A.D. and proceeded to the southwest, organizing the early kingdom of Kanem, with its capital, Birni Njimi, near the northeastern edge of Lake Chad. Bornu was then the most southerly province. In 1389 the Sef dynasty, as it had then become, was expelled from Kanem and moved to Bornu. From that time onward Bornu became the center

Chapter I
The Setting

[4-3]

101 For at least a millenium the drama of empire has been played out in an immense area of Africa known as the western Sudan which lies at the southern fringe of the Sahara and stretches in a roughly east-west direction across the continent from the Atlantic to Lake Chad. [178] Borno is one of the oldest of these and has maintained itself as an [631] ongoing political unit from early times into the modern world. Today the empire is a Muslim Emirate included as a sub-division of Borno 162 Province in the Chad basin of northeastern Nigeria. The Emirate has [131] an area of approximately 24,000 square miles and a population of [161] 1,005,000 (1952 census) of which 626,000 are Kanuri, and 156,000 are Fulani and Shuwa nomads.(1) The remaining 224,000 people include an unspecified number of small pagan groups in the south of the Emirate together with other Nigerians mostly from the Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba tribes. There are as well 5,000 non-Nigerians including Levantines, Europeans and Africans from other countries.

• 132 The Emirate lies within latitudes 11 to 13 N. and longitudes [131] 11 to 13½ S. and has a typical sub-Saharan savannah climate. There is a mean daily maximum temperature of 94° F. from March to June and a mean daily minimum of 66° F. from July to February. The rainfall varies from north to south, being somewhat heavier in the south. Mean rainfall figures in inches per month at Maiduguri for the last thirty-six years are as follows:

J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
.01	-	.01	.25	1.59	2.56	6.81	8.80	4.23	.75	.01	-

(1) The Province as a whole has a population of 1,596,000 of which 753,000 are Kanuri. Thus over 80% of the present Kanuri population of the Province live within the boundaries of the Emirate.

175 necessary to a growing administration. In Bornu, a provincial school
871 was set up in Maiduguri in 1915 with eleven pupils which taught Hausa and Kanuri (using English script) and arithmetic.(1) Muslim religious knowledge and Arabic were also made part of the curriculum, while English did not come in until somewhat later. By 1916 there were 74 pupils all drawn from the ranks of the aristocracy.

According to the opinion of contemporary officials who have worked in several areas of northern Nigeria, European education in Bornu is far behind that of any other province in the region. Certainly most of the schools that can be seen today are usually less than 10 years old, so that education in the European sense of the word has only recently been made available in any appreciable extent to the people of Bornu. Today each District has at least one small elementary school and the provincial secondary school has been enlarged.
175 This dearth of western educated personnel has brought to Bornu many
871 outsiders to fill the necessary jobs which the European and his record-
167 keeping culture and technology require. Due to over-population and a much longer tradition of western education in their own area, a large number of these have been Ibo people from southeast Nigeria.

175 In 1907 the British plan to rebuild the old 19th century
361 capital of Kuka was abandoned due to the extreme aridity of the local
[132] area, and the capital was henceforth situated at Maiduguri on the Alo river basin. Kuka soon dwindled in size and became a rural village.
175 On the other hand, the new capital which had previously had a fairly
369 large market could not produce enough grain to feed the suddenly ex-
433 panded population which flowed in when it became the center of the
178 Emirate. It was therefore found necessary from 1907 to 1914 to force

(1) Annual Report Bornu Province: 1915

Production

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Kanuri production is tied to two inter-related factors in the physical and social environment of Bornu. These are first the geographical and ecological characteristics of the area, and secondly the differentiation of production into agricultural and non-agricultural pursuits.

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The Chad basin has a short rainy season running from June to September and crop production is carried during these months. Planting begins about the time of the first rains and the first hoeing takes place shortly afterward. The second hoeing occurs near the end of the rainy season and harvesting is carried out from the beginning of October to the end of November. Each hoeing requires between two to three weeks' work and harvesting may take as long as a month. Between these periods, beyond occasional scrutiny to see that straying cattle have not broken into and eaten the produce, very little work is required in cultivating crops. Thus work on crop production is concentrated into less than six months, leaving the rest of the year free for other activities.

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In Magumeri village area, one-third of the cultivators reported that they did nothing else but farm. Only a few of these have surpluses to sell. The remaining two-thirds of the cultivators are semi-subsistence producers who acquire the remainder of their income from some non-agricultural activity. All cultivators, however, raise some cash crop. The subsistence balance in the area as a whole is maintained by small pockets of intensive surplus producers scattered throughout the entire region. These people are, by family tradition, farmers. They generally have good farm soil, with larger and more numerous holdings per person and their dry season activity consists of marketing